

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE: Strengthening Institutions, Fighting Corruption

At the January 2004 Special Summit of the Americas in Monterrey, Mexico, leaders adopted a series of new commitments to foster credibility and public trust in democratic institutions and to promote full implementation of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

Among these new steps were measures aimed at strengthening the Follow-Up Mechanism to the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption and agreement to develop additional transparency and anticorruption commitments. The leaders also agreed to hold consultations in the event that adherence to shared transparency and anticorruption objectives is compromised to a serious degree in any of the hemisphere's countries.

The United States is making active efforts to strengthen democratic institutions in the hemisphere. We support programs to provide democracy assistance, judicial reform and exchange of best practices, training of public officials, and civil society participation. We are also working multilaterally to combat corruption and increase transparency through mechanisms at the Organization of American States and other institutions.



A woman casts her referendum vote in a polling station in Montevideo, Uruguay, December 7, 2003. (Marcelo Hernandez, AP/WWP)

U.S. ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE HEMISPHERE'S AGENDA

- **Deny safe haven to corrupt officials, those who corrupt them, and their assets:** President Bush signed Presidential Proclamation 7750 on January 12, 2004, making certain corrupt foreign officials, those who corrupt them, and their dependents ineligible for U.S. visas. The U.S. also vigorously pursues cases involving assets that are the proceeds of corruption, and cooperates with other governments to return these assets to their rightful owners. The new United Nations Convention Against Corruption, negotiated with the input of the U.S. and 130 countries and signed by Attorney General Ashcroft on behalf of the U.S. in December 2003, contains a framework for facilitating asset recovery among nations.
- **Follow-up to the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption:** The U.S. supports and participates in the OAS Follow-up Mechanism, created in 2001 to promote implementation of the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption, the world's first multilateral treaty relating specifically to the fight against corruption. This convention contains commitments to criminalize corrupt actions and to facilitate mutual legal assistance among nations, and also urges governments to take good governance measures to prevent corruption from happening in the first place.
- **At their April 2004 meeting, Justice Ministers of the Americas** explored cooperation aimed at implementing the commitments made by leaders in the Declaration of Nuevo Leon.